

New Year—2020

“2020 Vision for the New Year” Pt.1

(12/29/19)

In a few days we will enter into a new year—2020.

And as we enter this new year—it’s critical that we have ‘2020 vision’ (the title of this message)—or in other words that we see clearly what’s really important and worth pursuing.

To do that we must see this year (and every year after it) thru the lens of God’s Word.

There are those who will look at this new year thru the lens of materialism, greed, success, pleasure and power (remember, this is an election year).

However, these lenses will produce a distorted view of life leading to misplaced priorities, bad choices and difficult if not devastating consequences for many.

It’s only when we view the new year (and life itself) thru the lens of God’s Word that things will come into focus and become clear.

Why the lens of God’s Word and not some other philosophical or ideological lens?

Because, God made us and therefore—no one else knows us better than He does!

In fact, if we look at God as our “Manufacturer”—the Bible then becomes the “Manufacturer’s Handbook.’

A manufacturer always includes with their product (especially a complicated piece of technology) an instruction manual that explains the product, how it works, how to care for it—and usually, a section that tells how to trouble shoot problems that arise and how to fix them.

The Bible tells us that we are “*fearfully and wonderfully made*”—in other words we are a complicated ‘piece of technology’ and only the One who made us (our Manufacturer) has the expertise to tell us how our lives were designed to operate and how to care for them spiritually and emotionally to ensure smooth operation and maximum productivity.

And especially, how to troubleshoot problems that arise in the course of life and what to do to “fix” what is broken and bring us back to wholeness and full working order!

So, the Bible in general is God’s instruction manual for our lives—which if followed will allow our lives (including things like ‘marriage’) to function the way God designed them.

We either follow God’s instruction manual, containing His wisdom for life—or we’re left with trying to live our lives by following the ‘*wisdom of the world*’.

Paul the apostle said that God has made foolish the wisdom of the world (which is nothing more than man trying to figure life out without God).

And He did so by showing how obeying what He has said produces a life of joy, fulness and fruitfulness—as opposed to living life by following the wisdom of all the so-called experts in the world!

President Harry Truman once said that, “*An expert is someone who refuses to learn anything new because then he would no longer be an expert!*”

And that is true with all the ‘experts’ in the world who constantly pass out advice to others, dropping it down from their ivory towers of academia upon the lowly, ignorant, uneducated masses as to how they should live their lives—when their own lives are a mess.

Like the secular marriage counselor who charged \$300 for a weekend couples’ seminar when she herself had been married and divorced five times!

As Jesus said, “*Physician, heal thyself!*”

And yet, people have been made to believe that man’s wisdom is better than God’s Word for living their lives—and so they reject the Bible in favor of the wisdom of the world—which is the ultimate foolishness!

But in fact, it’s worse than that.

James tells us that the wisdom of the world is: earthly, sensual and demonic and produces selfishness, confusion and every evil thing—whereas the wisdom that is from above is full of good fruits (produces many blessings in life).

Psalm 1:1-3 (NLT2)

¹ Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers. ² But they delight in the law of the LORD, meditating on it day and night. ³ They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do.

You might be thinking—“*Is there one thing—one principle, instruction or commandment in the Bible that God stresses above the others—one that is the most important of them all?*”

Well, actually there is—and I know it because Jesus told us what commandment was the greatest of them all—

Mark 12:30-31 (NKJV)

³⁰ And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first [supreme] commandment. ³¹ And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

I can make the case that the second flows from the first—or in other words, when a Christian loves God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength—they will love their neighbor at least as much as they love themselves and probably more so with His agape love. (Comment)

And so, of all the things that God stresses in His Word that is the most important for living a blessed and productive life—loving God with our whole being is at the top of the list.

This then becomes the ‘lens’ that we must view the new year thru—the standard that we measure our entire lives by including every pursuit we undertake.

This morning we stand at the threshold of a new year.

Every New Year brings with it new hope—hope that in this new year God will make things in our lives **new** in the sense of new opportunities, new strength for victory over old sins, a new relationship if your single—in other words, the hope that this year will be better than last year.

In this coming New Year there are probably certain things you'd like to see changed, things that you'd like to be different.

The problem is for most people, when they enter into a new year, all they do is *hope* that things will change, all they do is engage in *wishful thinking* that things will be different but they never do anything to bring about any change.

And so, it doesn't take long for the hope of a new year to become the same old defeat and discouragement of the past—so what do you do to make this year different?

Well, the first thing you do is to purpose to:

I. Love God with All Your Heart

To love God with all your heart means that you have to *purpose* certain things in your heart.

A. Purpose in your heart to live a life of obedience and commitment to God

A fruitful, blessed life doesn't happen on accident—it happens on purpose!

Daniel 1:8 (NKJV)

⁸ But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

A George Barna survey that came out a few years ago made these shocking claims—

“Although large majorities of the public claim to be “deeply spiritual” and say that their religious faith is “very important” in their life, only 15% of those who regularly attend a Christian church ranked their relationship with God as the top priority in their life...

The notion of personal holiness has slipped out of the consciousness of the vast majority of Christians. While just 21% of adults consider themselves to be holy, by their own admission large numbers have no idea what “holiness” means and only one out of every three (35%) believe that God expects people to become holy.”

Another survey conducted around the same time which compared the ethics of Christian and non-Christian adults, found that:

1. Almost as many Christians steal from work as non-Christians

2. Almost as many Christians use company phones for personal long-distance calls, as non-Christians

3. Christians are just as likely as non-Christians to:

- a. Falsify their income taxes*
- b. Commit plagiarism*
- c. Give bribes to obtain a building permit*
- d. Ignore construction specs*
- e. Illegally copy computer programs*
- f. Steal time from work*
- g. Exaggerate their products*
- h. Selectively obey the law (etc.)*

I'd say that we Christians need to make some real changes in order to make our "walk" equal our "talk".

Ezra 7:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD [THE WORD OF GOD], and to do *it*, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.

Obedience and commitment to God won't happen by accident they are only going to happen ON PURPOSE.

And so, like Ezra, prepare your heart to love God by reading and meditating on His Word with a heart—to obey!

B. Purpose in your heart to control what comes out of your mouth

Psalms 17:3 (NKJV)

³ You have tested my heart; You have visited *me* in the night; You have tried me and have found nothing; I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.

1. Lying

In that same survey I mentioned earlier, taken among Christians:

- a. 91% said that they lie on a regular basis
- b. 86% of children said they lie to their parents regularly
- c. 75% said they lie to their friends
- d. 69% said they lie to their spouses regularly
- e. 50% said they regularly called in sick, when they weren't

2. Gossip

Proverbs 10:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips *is* wise.

Psalms 141:3 (NKJV)

³ Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.

Proverbs 6:16-19 (NKJV)

¹⁶ These six *things* the LORD hates, Yes, seven *are* an abomination to Him:... ¹⁹ ...And one who sows discord among brethren [thru gossip].

James 3:5-10 (NKJV)

⁵ ...the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! ⁶ And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity... ⁸ ... *It is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.

C. Purpose in your heart to honor God with your finances

1. Giving to God

Malachi 3:8, 10 (NKJV)

⁸ "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings... ¹⁰ Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you *such* blessing That *there will not be room enough to receive it*.

2 Corinthians 9:6 (NKJV)

⁶ But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

2 Corinthians 9:7 (NKJV)

⁷ So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

The purpose of giving to God is not to help God—it's to honor Him by giving back to Him what He has given to us—which then He rewards us for in heaven!

2. Spending on self**Luke 16:11 (NLT)**

¹¹ And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven? (Comment)

It is required of a steward that they be found faithful—and spending what we do not have to buy what we do not need isn't good stewardship.

D. Purpose in your heart to bring God into every decision**Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT)**

⁶ Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NLT)

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.

⁶ Seek his will in all you do, and he will direct your paths.